

Message Text

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PASS AGRICULTURE ELECTRONICALLY

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SUBJECT: EC COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL MINISTERS: FISH

REF: (A) EC BRUSSELS 1939, (B) DUBLIN 551, (C) EC BRUSSELS 2252

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ON MARCH 14, THE EC COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL MINISTERS DISCUSSED EC INTERNAAL FISH REGIME AND EC FISHING ARRANGEMENTS WITH FAROE ISLANDS. IRELAND HAS POSTPONED AGAIN IMPLEMENTING UNILATERAL CONSERVATION MEASURES. SEPARATE TELEGRAM WILL COVER COUNCIL DISCUSSION ON FARM PRICE PROPOSALS AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL ITEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FIRST AGENDA ITEM COVERED BY THE EC COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL MINISTERS MARCH 14 WAS FISH, IN PARTICULAR THE EC INTERNAL REGIME. UK DELEGATION SOURCES STATED THAT SOME PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN AGREEING ON PRINCIPLES IN THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL FOR THE INTERIM REGIME, THE MOST IMPORTANT UNCLASSIFIED

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ELEMENT OF WHICH IS ESTABLISHMENT OF FISHING QUOTAS FOR THE MEMBER STATES FOR 1977 IN THE NEW 200-MILE EC FISHERY ZONES. HOWEVER, PRATICAL DIFFICULTIES REMAINED ABOUT ZONING, FISHING PLANS, AND ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS. ACCORDING TO PERMDEL SOURCEES, THE MINISTERS INCREASINGLY REALIZED DURING THEIR DISCUSSIONS THAT WHATEVER WAS DECIDED ON THE INTERIM REGIME WOULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PERMANENT INTERNAL REGIME.

THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL AS MODIFIED REMAINS THE BASIC WORK PLAN FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL GROUP WHICH WILL BE MEETING MARCH 18. THE INTERIM REGIME WILL BE DISCUSSED AGAIN BY THE AGRICULTURAL COUNCIL AT THEIR NEXT MEETING ON MARCH 25.

3. THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AGREED TO POSTPONE (FOR THE SECOND TIME) ADOPTION OF ITS UNILATERAL CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR A FORTNIGHT. IN PLACE OF THE UNILATERAL IRISH RESTRICTIONS ON BOAT SIZES IN IRISH WATERS, THE PROPOSED INTERIM INTERNAL REGIME WOULD REDUCE FISHING BY EC FISHERMEN OFF IRELAND (ESSENTIALLY PARTS OF ICES ZONE VI) FOR 1977 BUT PERMIT A 33 PERCENT INCREASE IN FISHING BY IRISH FISHERMEN IN THESE AREAS. IN REMARKS TO THE PRESS, COMMISSIONER GUNDELACH SAID THAT "THE COMMISSION PLAN IS BETTER THAN THE IRISH MEASURES; THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SKIN A CAT." HE ALLOWED THAT IT WOULD BE EASY TO CIRCUMVENT THE IRISH LIMITATION ON VESSEL SIZE BY CATCHING MORE IN SMALLER BOATS.

4. IN RESPONSE TO PRESSURE FROM MEMBER STATES FOR PROGRESS ON ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT INTERNAL REGIME AS PART OF THE COMMUNITY COMMON FISHING POLICY, COMMISSIONER GUNDELACH ANNOUNCED TO THE COUNCIL THAT THE COMMISSION WILL TRY TO SUBMIT ITS PROPOSAL FOR SUCH A REGIME BY MID-APRIL. HE HOPES THAT THERE WILL BE MEMBER STATE AGREEMENT BY THE END OF JUNE.

5. THERE WAS ALSO SOME DISCUSSION IN THE COUNCIL ABOUT THE DECLARED INTENT OF THE FAROE ISLANDS TO IMPLEMENT UNILATERAL

CONSERVATION MEASURES ON MARCH 15. THESE MEASURES CALLED FOR UNCLASSIFIED

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A SHARP REDUCTION IN THE EC CATCH OF COD AND HADDOCK IN FAROESE WATERS TO 1,000 M.T. FROM MARCH 15 TO MAY 1. THE UK, FRANCE AND GERMANY WOULD BE MOST AFFECTED. WHEN DENMARK AND THE FAROE ISLANDS AGREED TO POSTPONE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE MEASURES, THE EC WITHDREW ITS OBJECTIONS TO CONCLUSION OF THE FRAMEWORK FISHERY AGREEMENT WITH THE FAROE ISLANDS WHICH WAS SIGNED ON MARCH 15. THE PARTIES WILL CONSULT ON APPROPRIATE FISHING QUOTAS AND CONSERVATION MEASURES AS PROVIDED BY THE AGREEMENT. HINTON

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